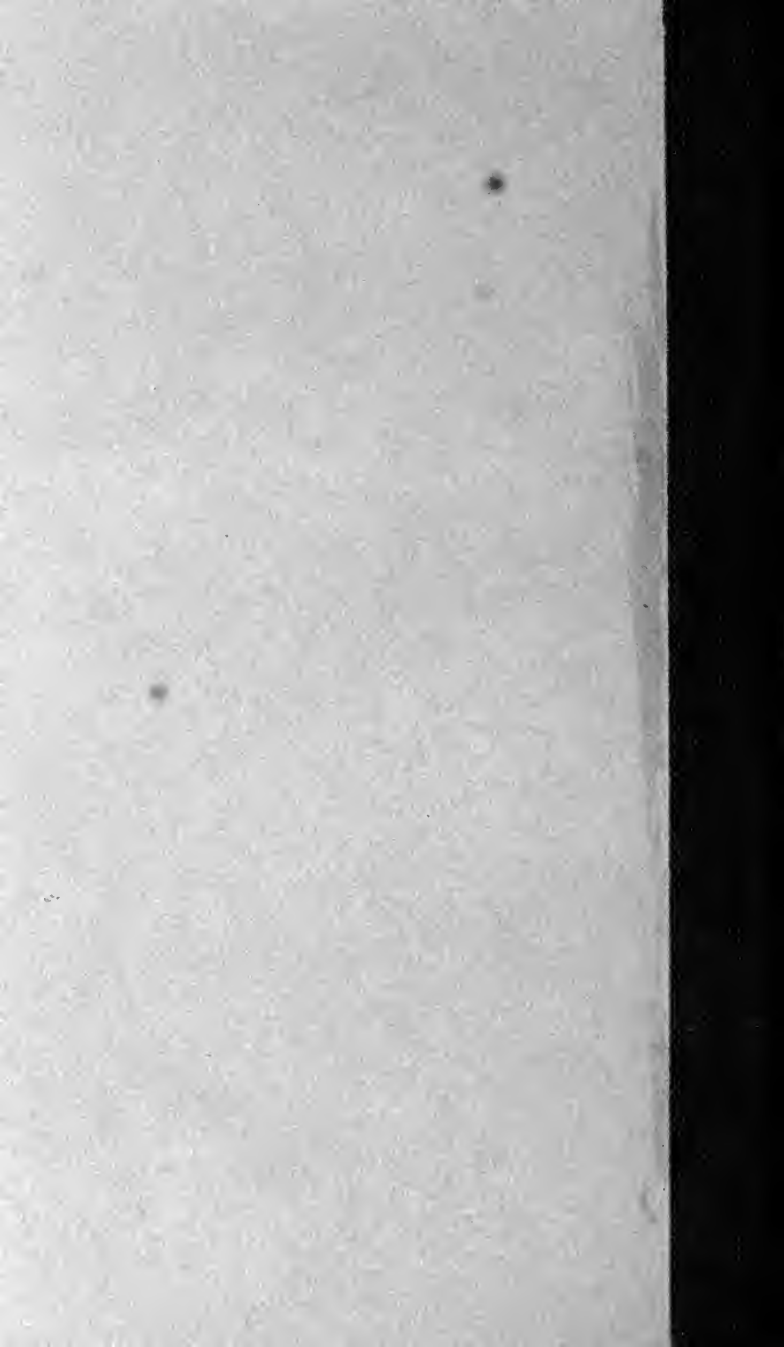


Denner, Adolphe Philippe
Noémie.

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NOÉMIE

A DRAMA

IN TWO ACTS

FROM THE FRENCH OF

MM. DENNERY AND CLEMENT.

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY

WILLIAM ROBERTSON.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET,
STRAND,
LONDON.

[1855?] 1856

NOÉMIE.

First performed at the Theatre du Gymnase, October 31st, 1845.; at the Princess's Theatre as "Ernestine," April 14th, 1846; St. James's Theatre as "Clarisse; or, the Foster Sister," February 17th, 1855; Grecian Saloon as "The Foster Sisters," 1855.

	Theatre du Gymnase.	Princess's.	St. James's.	Grecian.
COUNT D'AVRIGNY . . .	M. TISSERANT.	Mr. COOPER.	Mr. HERBERT.	Mr. B. POTTER.
ELEONORE D'AVRIGNY (his ne- phew.) . . .	M. NUMA.	Mr. J. WALLACK.	Mr. SIDNEY.	Mr. R. PHILLIPS.
JULÈS DE MORNAS . . .	M. J. DESCHAMPS.	Mr. LEIGH MURRAY.	Mr. H. RIVERS.	Mr. F. CHARLES.
SERVANT . . .	M. J. BORDIER.			Mr. HAMILTON.
VALENTINE DE QUERCY (ward to the Count.) . . .	Mmes. E. SAUVAGE.	Miss MAY.	Miss BUFTON.	Mrs. C. MONTGOMERY.
NOÉMIE (an orphan.) . . .	Mmes. ROSE CHERI.	Mrs. STIRLING.	Miss BULMER.	Miss JANE COVENEY.
ANETTE (her foster-sister) . . .	Mmes. DESBEE.	Miss EMMA STANLEY.	Miss ELSWORTHY.	Miss H. COVENEY.
MARGUERITE (housekeeper to the count.) . . .	Mmes. LAMBQUIN.	Mrs. FOSBROKE.	Miss ST. CLAIR.	Miss JOHNSTONE.

Notary, Ladies, Gentlemen, and Domestics.

A lapse of three months between the acts.

Act 1. Chateau and grounds of De Quercy.—THE MARRIAGE.

Act 2. A richly furnished saloon of the Chateau.—THE MYSTERY

This drama is the property of Thomas Hailes Lacy.

N O É M I E .

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Garden of the Chateau de Quercy. The chateau, L. U. E. ; pavilion, R. 2 E. ; marble table and rustic chair opposite, R. 3 E. ; garden chair, R. 1 E. ; shrubberies, R. and L.*

Enter JULES from R. U. E.

JULES. (*to SERVANT, who enters from the pavilion.*)
Announce my arrival to my aunt and cousin.

Enter ELEONORE from R. U. E.

ELEO. Announce my arrival to my uncle, the Count d'Avrigny. My dear Jules, I'm delighted to see you.

[SERVANT *exits* R.]

JULES. (L.) Eleonore!

ELEO. (R.) Yes, Eleonore, all this way from Paris.

JULES. Where every pleasure surrounded you—

ELEO. And every woman was in love with me. We often spoke of you—your sudden departure made a great sensation; all sorts of rumours were flying about. For a month the whole opera talked of nothing else.

JULES. The whole opera was too kind.

ELEO. After that, everybody's attention was diverted to a more important event.

JULES. What was that?

ELEO. The debut of a new dancer—a charming creature—a veritable *houri*: hair, beautiful black—eyes, beautiful blue—teeth, beautiful bl—white, beautiful white—Italian style. The club was in ecstasies. She had a legion of adorers, and I—I, my dear boy, was the one lucky fellow who fixed her affections. She singled me out for he

preference ; “ I came—I saw, &c.”—she doated on me—absolutely doated ; I knew she would, and I’m always right.

JULES. Happy dog !

ELEO. Wasn’t I ? For six months I lived in a paradise of love, velvet, and gold ; and exactly five weeks one day and three hours ago, I learnt that Caroline—her name was Caroline—had quitted my house, moved off, bag and baggage, with everything that the place contained ; tables, chairs, mirrors — everything ; and that she had taken refuge under the fatherly wing of a gentleman who was very middle-aged, but very rich. And to prove that she had not quite forgotten me, she left upon the floor of her dressing-room, directed to me with her best respects, a gigantic pile of tradesmen’s bills, all unpaid, but for all of which I had given her the money.

JULES. Poor fellow !

ELEO. Poor is exactly the word, for I was ruined. I was meditating seriously between charcoal and the Seine, when my uncle, the nabob from Hindostan, wrote to me to say that he forgave my former follies, and that his heart and banker’s book were again open to me : so I flew here on the wings of reciprocal affection, to open wide my arms for my dear uncle, and my hands for any little trifle he chooses to bestow. And you, my dear fellow, what have you been about ?

JULES. Me ! Oh, fatigued with the enervating excitement of Parisian life, I retired to my country house at Murville ; there I passed a tranquil and happy existence among the good folks of the village.

ELEO. Make any conquests ?

JULES. Me ! My dear—

ELEO. Yes, you did—come now, tell me.

JULES. Well, I found in a farm-house a young girl whose beauty, innocence, and candour—

ELEO. Exactly ! I knew it—I’m always right.

JULES. She had been educated in a convent which she had quitted to be near her mother who was ill, and who shortly after died in her arms.

ELEO. Poor little thing ! (*resuming his tone of gaiety.*)
End of chapter the first.

JULES. I saw her but seldom, and there seemed to float

around her such an atmosphere of womanly grace and purity, that I hardly dared address her. When we met we were silent, but each heart guessed the secret of the other, and we felt that we loved, though we never openly avowed it.

ELEO. Ah, that wasn't like me and Caroline; we said that we loved, though we never felt it.

JULES. I was about to offer her my hand—

ELEO. What! marry her? Tush! absurd! Why you must have been dreaming, man.

JULES. When all of a sudden she disappeared, and no one knew the reason of her departure, nor whither she had gone.

ELEO. Oh, you'll see her again, some night when we are behind the scenes at that general rendezvous for innocence and simplicity—among the ballet girls at the opera.

JULES. Oh, absurd!

ELEO. Yes, there was a little dancer came out last week—blue eyes, light hair, and legs like—oh!

JULES. I tell you 'tis not at the opera that we shall meet again.

ELEO. We shall see. But I should like to know what reason my uncle had for being reconciled to me.

JULES. What can that matter; it can't be to make his will, he is too young for that yet—about thirty-six.

ELEO. Thirty-nine.

JULES. No, thirty-six.

ELEO. No, no, thirty-nine.

JULES. And you are his only relative?

ELEO. That is what I reckon on. I've always said to myself, I am only son—I mean an only nephew. My uncle has no other child but me—I mean no other heir.

Enter VALENTINE from house, L. U. E.

He said, in his letter, that he would receive me if I would be reasonable and steady—if I would marry —(*seeing VALENTINE.*) Eh? perhaps!

JULES. My dear cousin!

VALEN. My mother will be delighted to see you, Jules.

ELEO. She's very handsome! Mademoiselle—

VALEN. Excuse me, sir—Monsieur Eleonore, I believe?

ELEO. (c.) Eleonore d'Avrigny. (*she smiles.*) Does my name make you laugh?

VALEN. (l.) 'Tis somewhat singular to give a man a lady's name.

ELEO. Oh, that's easily explained. When I was born, France consumed daily an enormous number of her sons; therefore my father earnestly hoped that fate would bless him with a daughter. To effectually disguise from prying curiosity the fact that I was a little boy, he gave out that I was a little girl, and called me Eleonore; and for ten years I was a little girl—that is, I mean for ten years I wore pet—

JULES. (r., *interrupting.*) Eleonore!

ELEO. I mean ladies' clothes—ladies' clothes.

JULES. But how is it that I find you and my aunt living in the chateau d'Avrigny?

VALEN. My father and the Count d'Avrigny were old comrades, and when my father died, the count adopted me—became my tutor. Some time ago he wrote to my mother, and begged her to inhabit this chateau until his return.

ELEO. Oh, my uncle is your tutor. (*aside—r.*) He forgives me—writes to see me—hopes that I will marry. I see—she's very pretty—I am always right!

VALEN. Two months ago he arrived here. I was afraid of him—of a tutor. I had always seen such old frights of tutors: at the theatre all tutors and guardians are ugly old men—

ELEO. Who want to compel their wards and pupils to marry them.

VALEN. (*quickly.*) But the count is different.

JULES. (*observing her.*) Indeed!

VALEN. He is only thirty-six years of age.

ELEO. Thirty-nine—thirty-nine!

VALEN. And he is so good, so indulgent—everybody about here loves him.

JULES. (*significantly.*) Everybody?

VALEN: Yes, everybody. And lately he and my mother have been closeted talking about something. I don't know what it is, but I think it's a marriage.

ELEO. (*aside.*) I knew it—I'm always right.

JULES. A marriage! And are you to be the bride?

VALEN. I think so.

ELEO. Of course. And do you know who is destined to be the happy man who—

VALEN. (*a little embarrassed.*) I think so.

ELEO. (*aside.*) He has proposed for me then already. (*to her.*) And are you content to accept the favoured object of—

VALEN. Oh, yes. (*stopping suddenly.*) Perhaps it was wrong to say that (*goes up stage.*)

ELEO. Not at all—not at all. (*arranging his dress.*) It shows your taste, your very good taste.

JULES. (*to ELEONORE.*) What do you mean?

ELEO. (*to JULES.*) That my uncle means me to marry your cousin, and settle all his property on me. Yes, uncle, yes; you shall have your wish. Marriage is the last folly of which I will be guilty.

JULES. But don't you think it possible—

ELEO. Hush! hush! don't say anything before her—'twill embarrass her.

JULES. The coxcomb! (*aside.*) But, cousin, I must go and pay my respects to my aunt.

VALEN. Certainly. Excuse us, Monsieur. (ELEONORE bows.) Your uncle is shooting, but he will soon be back. I know that he has to speak to you on a certain subject.

ELEO. Of course—of course. *Au revoir*, my dear. (*to JULES.*) What's her name?

JULES. Valentine.

ELEO. My dear Valentine, (*seizing her hand—she is surprised.*) don't be long. (*tenderly.*)

[JULES and VALENTINE exit into chateau, L. U. E.]

ELEO. There goes another! I wish I had kept a list of my conquests: I should pop her down as the last. She is beautiful—adorable! My dear, patriotic, munificent uncle, receive my blessing.

D'AVRIGNY enters on the last words, R. U. E.

COUNT. (R.) Thank you, nephew, thank you.

ELEO. (L.) What! is that you? (D'AVRIGNY gives his gun, hat, &c., to SERVANT, who exits.) My dear uncle, how can I thank you—

COUNT. For the money I sent you? Tcha! I had more than I knew what to do with, and what I sent you was the interest of capital that I knew you were waiting for.

ELEO. Thanks, my dear uncle. You gave disinterestedly, and I received nobly—didn't I? If you know how to give, I know how to receive—don't I?

COUNT. You do, indeed. Now I want to speak to you on a certain subject.

ELEO. (*aside.*) Exactly her words: "a certain subject." Go on, dear uncle; I'm ready to receive anything from you.

COUNT. My dear nephew, (*sits E.*) you have had great experience of the fair sex?

ELEO. Very great, dear uncle, very great.

COUNT. I have not. Aboard the frigate where I passed fifteen years of my life, I had nothing about me but sailors—my brave comrades. But before my career as a sailor began, I loved once—only once; the remembrance of it thrills me even now: and I think, nephew, that I loved with my whole heart.

ELEO. Everybody begins that way at the first start; but you get over it in time.

COUNT. But now that I am neither handsome nor young—

ELEO. Why you're only thirty-six.

COUNT. Thirty-nine—thirty-nine.

ELEO. (*aside.*) I said so—I knew it—I'm always right.

COUNT. And I've two or three wounds about me—

ELEO. Honourable scars, uncle, honourable scars.

COUNT. Whenever I find myself face to face with a woman, I hesitate, and stammer and tremble, that I have neither power to judge myself, nor explain my sentiments to the lady.

ELEO. Oh, I'm not at all like that. I judge at the first sight. In love affairs I've the eye of—of—of a Napoleon.

COUNT. Well, then, you must give me your opinion of a lady—

ELEO. (*impatiently.*) Yes; I know—I know.

COUNT. (*astonished.*) What, you know!

ELEO. Oh, yes. I saw it at a glance—you mean Mademoiselle de Quercy?

COUNT. Have you seen her, then?

ELEO. Oh, yes, I've seen her, just now, here.

COUNT. And what do you think of her?

ELEO. Oh, glorious! Glorious! Beauty, grace, intelligence—very intelligent; she appreciated me the moment she saw me.

COUNT. Do you think—

ELEO. It's an excellent match, uncle—I approve your choice with all my heart.

COUNT. You do? And you've no objection—

ELEO. Objection! I'm delighted—transported!

COUNT. (*aside.*) Well, he takes it better than I thought he would. Thanks, nephew; I shall see the wish dearest to my heart accomplished; and I thank you for falling into my views without reluctance; for you see, there's no time to lose, and as I should like to kiss some children of the house of D'Avrigny before I die—

ELEO. My dear uncle, you shall kiss a dozen.

COUNT. (*delighted.*) Do you think so?

ELEO. Think so—I'm sure of it. I'm always right.

COUNT. My dear Eleonore, do you want any money?

ELEO. I always do, dear uncle, always.

MARGUERITE *enters from chateau*, L. U. E.

MARG. Breakfast is served, monsieur, and the ladies wait for you.

COUNT. (*giving ELEONORE a pocket-book.*) Here, my dear nephew, I thank you for falling so readily into my views.

ELEO. And I thank you, uncle, for falling so readily into mine.

COUNT. Come then—

ELEO. To breakfast? In one moment; I've just to run to post a letter, and I'll be back in a minute.

[*Exit D'AVRIGNY to chateau*, L. U. E., and ELEONORE
L. 2 E.]

MARG. Yes, I'm sure of it, now; all these invitations are for a wedding. How happy Mademoiselle Valentine seems. The idea of being the mistress of a fine house at her age.

SERVANT *brings on* NOEMIE and ANETTE, L. 1 E.

SERVANT. This way—you had better speak to madame.

ANETTE. Does Madame de Quercy live here?

MARG. Yes.

NOEMIE. But the chateau belongs to the Count d'Avrigny, does it not?

MARG. Yes, my dear—to the Count d'Avrigny.

NOEMIE. (*trembling.*) And—and is he here?

MARG. He is at breakfast now.

ANETTE. Then we'll sit down till he's done. I suppose we can sit down, can't we, mum?

MARG. Certainly. Do you come from Paris?

ANETTE. Further than that—we've come sixty-five leagues.

MARG. What, you've just got down from the diligence?

NOEMIE. No, madame; we are poor, and we have walked.

MARG. Walked!

ANETTE. Yes, walked, on foot.

MARG. Walked sixty leagues! You must be exhausted.

ANETTE. Not a bit, I'm used to it. My poor little friend is though, she ain't used to it. Sit down, dear.

MARG. Better go into my room in the pavillion there, and rest as long as you like.

(ANETTE *takes* Noemie's bundle from her, and carries it into the pavilion, R. 2 E.

NOEMIE. Thank you, madame, you are very kind.

MARG. Whom do you wish to speak to?

NOEMIE. To Mademoiselle Valentine de Quercy.

MARG. Who shall I announce to her?

NOEMIE. Her foster sister, madame, and her friend.

MARG. Her foster sister! Oh, I remember. Mademoiselle wrote to her when she heard that the poor girl had become an orphan?

ANETTE. (*coming from pavilion.*) Yes, so she did.

MARG. I'll go and tell her. Wait here, or in the pavilion. As soon as they've risen from table, I'll let you know.

[*Exit* MARGUERITE, L. U. E.]

NOEMIE. (*looking round her with emotion.*) Here, here! Oh, how my heart beats!

ANETTE. Hollo! what, you're at it again! Just the same as you was the day you resolved to start. What's the matter?

NOEMIE. You shall know soon.

ANETTE. The sooner the better, for I'm all abroad at present. When I received the letter from Mademoiselle de Quercy, who had never seen me since we was both fourteen months old, offering me a place with her, I said to myself, "Hurrah! I'm off!" But when I thought I should have to leave you, I asked myself the question, "Shall I leave Noémie?" and I answered myself directly, "No, I won't, by jingo!" But when I showed you the letter, you sung out, "I'll go, too—I must go with you;" and you'd got two tears in your eyes as big as gooseberries—so I said no more, but I ran home and embraced my old mother-in-law, my sole surviving relative; bade good bye to my big dog, Cæsar, the only friend I have in the village; tied up my bundle, and an hour after we were on the road.

NOEMIE. And during the whole of the journey you didn't once ask me a question.

ANETTE. No, but I wanted to all the while; for not to know and to want to ask is only natural; but now that we are here, I ask the question. What have we come for—and what is to come of it?

NOEMIE. Happiness, I hope; the accomplishment of our dearest wishes; this letter (*giving it her.*) contains all our future hopes, all our future fortunes.

ANETTE. Lord! all in that letter? (*returning it.*)

NOEMIE. And whatever my destiny may be, you shall share it with me.

ANETTE. Then that letter belongs to both of us; and if it does, I've a right to know what's inside it. (*reflecting.*) Future hopes! fortune! accomplishment of our dearest wishes! What can be inside it? (*suddenly.*) Is it a husband?

NOEMIE. Better than that.

ANETTE. Better than that? Two husbands?

NOEMIE. Do not jest. This letter was written by

my dying mother; it contains her last adieu to—to my father.

ANETTE. To your father!

NOÉMIE. Listen. On the day on which my poor mother died, she called me to her bedside, and said to me, "Noémie, you must summon all your fortitude, all your courage, to hear with calmness what I am about to tell you." For the first time she spoke to me of my father. For eighteen years she had been separated from him. She had remained poor and struggling—he was rich, honoured and happy. He loved her truly, but his family, who were proud and ambitious, had found means to separate them; they had menaced him with misery and exile if he dared to dishonour the name of his noble ancestors by a degrading marriage; and to save him, my mother sacrificed herself—to save him she left her native village, while he embarked for some foreign land; years after, when he returned to France, his family told him that my mother was no more.

ANETTE. Your mother told you all this?

NOÉMIE. And more. She said, "At first I was proud of the devotion I had shown; but, too late, I felt that I had not only sacrificed my own happiness, but the happiness and prospects of my child. I was a mother; I sought him far and near; I used every exertion—made every inquiry to find him, but in vain. You, my child, may perhaps be more fortunate. Heaven will assist an innocent child who seeks her only natural protector! Heaven will restore to you a father; when you find him, give him this letter, tell him that my last words were of him, my last sigh for him; and you, our child, tell him that I blessed you and prayed for him, and that he might treasure you in his soul as I had treasured the love I bore him." And so, Anette, with one hand clasped in mine, her other pressing me close—close to her heart—a prayer upon her lips—a kiss upon my forehead—my mother died. (*a long pause.*)

ANETTE. Noémie, I—I understand, now, why you wished to leave the village; but I don't understand why, when you read the letter from Mademoiselle de Quercy—

NOEMIE. I resolved to go with you ; because the letter told you that she waited for you at the village of St. Florentine—in the chateau of the Count d'Avrigny, because the Count d'Avrigny is my father !

ANETTE. (*astonished.*) What ?

NOEMIE. Now do you understand ? I am near him. I shall see him—he will hold me to his heart ! a father's heart ! Oh, that one joy will repay me for my sacrifice !

ANETTE. Sacrifice ! What do you mean by sacrifice !

NOEMIE. (*averting her eyes.*) Oh, I forgot—I didn't tell you.

ANETTE. Hollo ! what's the matter ? you tremble—you avert your eyes—you blush ! Oho ! What, have you got a—

NOEMIE. (*softly.*) Yes.

ANETTE. Umph ! Who is he !

NOEMIE. A young man.

ANETTE. I thought so.

NOEMIE. Noble, generous, and handsome.

ANETTE. Of course ! they always are.

NOEMIE. But before I knew who was my father I had no right to aspire to be his wife, so I resolved to fly him.

ANETTE. Ah, I see ; but now that you are going to be a fine lady, now that you've got a grand father—stop a bit, you'll love me all the same for all that, shan't you ?

NOEMIE. Did I not say that we would share our happiness ?

ANETTE. Yes, but we can't share a father ; nor a husband, neither—at least, I shouldn't like it ; besides, I don't care about men. I hate 'em. (*angrily.*) A nasty set of deceitful, silly, ugly—(*looking off.*) here's one coming, (*changing her manner.*) What a nice looking chap !

Enter JULES from L. U. E.

JULES. (*surprised.*) Noémie !

ANETTE. (*looking at them.*) Eh ?

JULES. Here !

ANETTE. Oh !

JULES. Can I believe my eyes ? You here, Noémie—you whose departure rendered me so wretched ?

ANETTE. (*aside to her.*) Who is this chap ?

NOEMIE. He whom I resolved to fly.

ANETTE. Well, for a man you run away from, you don't seem very much alarmed at seeing him again.

JULES. To leave me so suddenly—without a word, without a look. You never loved me.

NOEMIE. I left you, Monsieur Jules, because it was my duty—because I had a sacred duty to fulfil, and because, too—I confess it—I was afraid—

JULES. Afraid!

NOEMIE. Yes, of you—of myself.

JULES. But my love was an honest one—my love was such that it would have waited till the time when master of myself, I could have claimed your hand, and said, “Noémie, I have neither fortune nor title, but I love you. Be my wife.”

NOEMIE. His wife! Had you even said that to me, Monsieur Jules, my duty would have compelled me to have—to have refused you.

JULES. Refused me!

ANETTE. Refused him! What for? He'd make a very good sort of a husband, I'm sure.

NOEMIE. Monsieur Jules, a month ago I should have said, the Vicomte de Mornas cannot marry a poor girl who has neither name nor fortune; but, to-day, I have better hopes.

JULES. Better hopes! What mean you?

SERVANT *enters*, L. U. E.

SERVANT. Breakfast is over, and madame Marguerite will present the young women to our master.

NOEMIE. I shall see him, then—my—

JULES. What is the matter?

NOEMIE. Nothing, nothing! (*aside to ANETTE.*) To see him, to speak to him—give me your hand, sister—support me—I—

ANETTE. Noémie, courage; come—come into the pavilion for a moment, till you are restored.

(ANETTE *leads* NOEMIE *into pavilion*, R.)

JULES. She is ill. (*to SERVANT.*) Call Marguerite.

ANETTE. (*coming from pavilion.*) No, no, 'tis useless. The fatigue of our journey, and another cause that I mustn't tell you.

JULES. 'Tis strange, her presence here ! *(musing.)*

ANETTE. *(to SERVANT—aside.)* Here ! quick ! take this letter to Monsieur d'Avrigny—say that the answer is waited for here. *(ANETTE goes into pavilion, R.)*

SERVANT. Yes, mademoiselle. *(looking off.)* Why here he comes down the road ; perhaps he has come from the notary's. *(going off to meet him.)*

JULES. No, no ! I am about to inform the notary. What can she mean ? “ A month ago I would have refused you, but to day—” What mystery ! Doubtless I shall soon know all. I feel so happy !

ELEONORE *enters, an open letter in his hand, L. 2 E.*

ELEO. Here's an affair ! A bombshell—an earthquake—a tornado ! *(walking about.)*

JULES. You here, my dear friend ? I am the happiest of men !

ELEO. What an infernal nuisance !

JULES. I have seen her—I have found her !

ELEO. Confound her, I say !

JULES. What ? *(aside.)* Oh, I see ! He has found out his mistake about the marriage. *(aloud.)* Poor Eleanore ! I pity you with all my heart ! *[Exit JULES, L 1 E.]*

ELEO. Pity me ! does he know the contents of this cursed letter ? D—n the letter ! The servant brought it me ; it was addressed to Monsieur d'Avrigny ; I thought it was for me ; I opened it and—oh ! what was it I read ! That my uncle had a child ! an heiress ! not a joint one ! a whole heiress ! a complete one ! and this awful blow comes on me on the very day that he is about to marry me and to make me his heir ; if he had received this I should have been a ruined man ; and this day, too ! I ask anybody if this girl, after having waited eighteen years, couldn't have waited a day or two longer ? The man told me she was in the garden, but I didn't see her. If I could only get her to go, if only for a few days I shouldn't care. If I could get rid of her by money, I shouldn't care, because my uncle is so rich it wouldn't cost me a farthing.

ANETTE *enters from pavilion, R.*

Eh ! a young girl.

ANETTE.. A young gentleman!

ELEO. That's her! I feel it's her! I'm always right; besides she's got the family nose! She's very pretty!

ANETTE. How he looks at me! he seems a rum 'un.

ELEO. Mademoiselle, was it you who—who gave this letter—

ANETTE. To the servant; yes, sir, it was for Monsieur d'Avrigny. (*seeing letter.*) Eh! are you Monsieur d'Avrigny?

ELEO. Me! me! (*aside.*) She takes me for her father! Mademoiselle, I am only twenty-seven years of age, and at the age of twenty seven it is impossible that I could have—

ANETTE. (*not understanding him.*) Eh?

ELEO. Eh! How old are you?

ANETTE. Eighteen.

ELEO. Well, take eighteen from twenty-seven.

ANETTE. Well?

ELEO. And nine remains! nine! Now at nine years old it is impossible that I could have had a—

ANETTE. What?—had a what?

ELEO. I mean that I am—no, I mean ^that I am not—I mean—that is—I—I am my uncle's nephew.

ANETTE. The Count d'Avrigny—

ELEO. Is my uncle.

ANETTE. Then how came you to have that letter?

ELEO. (*embarrassed.*) How? why I—how—

ANETTE. Did the servant give it you?

ELEO. Yes, the servant gave it me. Exactly.

ANETTE. And what for?

ELEO. What for?

ANETTE. That you might give the answer to it?

ELEO. Yes, that I might give the answer to it! (*aside.*) She possesses a great genius for invention.

ANETTE. But why won't Monsieur d'Avrigny give it himself? Isn't it favourable?

ELEO. Favourable! No, it's not favourable! (*aside.*) She gets me out of the scrape capitally.

ANETTE. Won't he see his daughter? Does he want to banish her from his presence?

ELEO. No, no! but, mademoiselle, you are so hand-

some that I don't want to wound your feelings; so if you'd only go back again, we could—

ANETTE. Go back again! (*astonished.*)

NOEMIE *appears on pavilion steps.*

NOEMIE. What do I hear?

ELEO. My uncle would remember you handsomely.

NOEMIE. (*advancing R.*) How?

ELEO. Another young woman!

ANETTE. My sister!

ELEO. Sister! another heiress! another residuary legatee!

ANETTE. My friend!

ELEO. Oh, I see! your sister figuratively. (*aside.*) Thank Heaven!

NOEMIE. Tell your uncle, sir, that his daughter will return to her native village.

ELEO. She'll return! (*to ANETTE.*) You'll return? That's right. I'm glad to hear it.

NOEMIE. She wants no money. Her labour will suffice to satisfy her wants. Alone she can fight the battle of life, and the sacred memory of her mother will give her courage.

ELEO. Eh! this language! Can I be wrong? Is this one the real daughter of— Mademoiselle—

NOEMIE. Tell him she came not here to ask for money, but for affection—for a father's love. "Perhaps," she thought, "he is old and feeble; I shall be near him, and, as my mother said, 'make him as happy as his family have made me wretched, and I shall be avenged.'"

ELEO. (*to ANETTE.*) Am I to say that for you, mademoiselle? (*aside.*) No, not for her, it's for the other one. (*to NOEMIE.*) but I should like to know—

ANETTE. (*crying.*) Tell your uncle he's a cruel old wretch; he doesn't know the daughter he denies; someday he'll know what he has lost when it's too late.

ELEO. (*aside.*) Tears! It must be her then! (*to ANETTE.*) But mademoiselle—

NOEMIE. Come!

ANETTE. Our bundles are in there.

NOEMIE. We will not remain in his house a minute longer. *(they go into pavilion R.)*

ELEO. Curse me if I know which is which; but as they are both going it don't matter. I am saved; but I am a d—d rascal. If she would but have accepted money, when—no matter! After I'm married I'll arrange all that. Eh! lots of people coming!

Enter GUESTS R. U. E. who bow to him.

Eh! we are going to sign the contract then. My uncle—my dear uncle is about to give me an agreeable surprise! There are my guests, my witnesses; there only wants a notary!

Enter NOTARY, L. 1. E.

There he is! Now I want nothing but the wedding presents; and perhaps my uncle has already bought them for me.

Enter TWO SERVANTS with basket containing wedding presents, L. U. E.

Of course! there they are! I'm like the man in the Arabian Nights. Now if she would only—of course! *(looking off.)* here comes the bride with my uncle; the bride and the Count d'Avrigny.

NOEMIE. *(on pavilion steps, with ANETTE.)* My father! then I shall see him before I go!

Enter D'AVRIGNY, VALENTINE, MARGUERITE, and SERVANTS, from L. U. E.

COUNT. *(R. of VALENTINE.)* My friends, congratulate me; I have the honour of presenting—

ELEO. *(L. of VALENTINE.)* We have the honour of presenting—

COUNT. Madame Valentine d'Avrigny.

ELEO. Madame Valentine d'Avrigny, my—

COUNT. My wife! *(all bow.)*

NOEMIE. *(R.)* His wife!

ELEO. His wife! his wife! Eh! no, he is mistaken!

COUNT. I intended this announcement to be a surprise

for everybody; but my nephew here guessed my intention, didn't you?

ELEO. (*bothered.*) Me! eh! oh yes! (*aside.*) His wife! If I were his uncle I'd disinherit him.

VALEN. (*to MARGUERITE.*) But my foster sister, where is she? (*MARGUERITE points to NOEMIE and ANETTE. ANETTE is about to step forward, when NOEMIE comes before her and curtseys R. C.*)

VALEN. You? (*NOEMIE curtseys.*)

ANETTE. (*aside.*) But—

NOEMIE. (*to her.*) Silence!

MARG. Then you are the person who is to be waiting woman to Madame le Comtess d'Avrigny?

NOEMIE. Waiting woman to my father's wife! Oh, my mother! (*aside.*)

ELEO. (*aside.*) Then the other is my uncle's daughter. I thought so—I'm always right.

(*music piano till end of act.*)

ANETTE. (*to NOEMIE.*) But what is to become of me?

ELEO. (*hearing her—close to her R.—whispering.*) A brilliant fate is in store for you.

ANETTE. A brilliant fate! What, am I to be a waiting woman, too?

NOEMIE. His servant! but I shall at least be near him. Mother, your will shall be obeyed!

(*D'AVRIGNY presents VALENTINE to his GUESTS; NOEMIE watches him with interest; ANETTE picks up the two bundles they have dropped; ELEONORE remains near her, evidently struck by her appearance.—Picture.*)

END OF ACT I.

MARGUERITE AND SERVANTS.

* * * * *

NOEMIE.

*

ANETTE.

*

D'AV. and VAL.

*

GUESTS.

* *

ELEO.

*

R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.

Audience.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A richly-furnished saloon.—C. doors ; doors R. and L. 3 E., sofa, R., work-table and two chairs, B. C., arm-chair and footstool, L. C., table, L.*

MARGUERITE and JULES enter C. doors.

MARG. Madame is now at her toilette. I will tell her that you are waiting.

JULES. Stay a minute, Marguerite—I wish to speak to you about—

MARG. About Mademoiselle Anette ?

JULES. Anette—yes, yes, of Mademoiselle Anette. (*aside.*) I cannot accustom myself to that inexplicable change of name.

MARG. Ah, we may well talk of nothing else but her. The annoyance and trouble she causes her mistress—

JULES. Why does my cousin not complain to her husband ?

MARG. What could she complain of ? Since the count has been confined to his room, Mademoiselle Anette has not quitted him for a single instant ; she sits up every night with him, and attends to him as if she were a wife.

JULES. Surely my cousin cannot complain of that ?

MARG. But she can complain of Monsieur the Count preferring her attendance to that of his lawful wedded wife. And Monsieur the Count seems to think so much of her ; nobody can attend to him—nobody can administer food or medicine to him but Mademoiselle Anette—a stranger, a servant ! The countess has said nothing as yet, but I know that she feels the pangs of jealousy, which her pride compels her to conceal.

JULES. But what end can this poor girl propose to gain by—

MARG. The count is very rich.

JULES. No, no, Marguerite, I cannot believe that a

young girl whom I knew some time ago to be so good and kind, could calculate on—

MARG. Then the jealousy of Madame the Countess has some real foundation?

JULES. Jealousy! Can you suppose that—no, no, impossible! (*aside.*) And yet the hope she gave me the day I met her at the chateau, and which seemed to vanish since she has seen the count. There is some mystery, I am convinced.

ELEONORE *enters c. from L., hearing the last words.*

ELEO. So am I—and I'm always right. I guess what you are talking about. My poor pretty little aunt—poor thing! Decidedly I must talk seriously to my uncle. I must give him a lecture on morality.

MARG. I'm afraid, monsieur, that your uncle will not see you. [*Exit L. door.*]

JULES. I'm sure he won't.

ELEO. Why not?

JULES. Oh, your conduct is such that your uncle is enraged against you.

ELEO. Oh, never mind that. I have only to say one word, and he'll open wide his arms to receive me—cover me with eulogiums—pay all my debts—debts I have owed—debts I do owe, and debts I'm going to owe. Lend me a thousand crowns?

JULES. Not I. I'll not encourage you in your follies.

ELEO. Nonsense! I'll give a bill on my uncle, and I know that he'll know my signature.

JULES. You are sure then that your uncle will forgive you?

ELEO. You see this pocket-book? (*showing one.*)

JULES. Well?

ELEO. Inside that there are two envelopes; inside the two envelopes are two papers of great importance—one, a full, true, and particular inventory of all my debts, with the names and occupations of my creditors—you're down among the rest—a very numerous company, if not a select one, I assure you.

JULES. And the other envelope—

ELEO. Contains my justification. A letter, nothing

but a letter, sir, which will make him pardon all my follies, past, present, and to come.

JULES. And do you mean to say that you are seriously caught this time?

ELEO. Completely. I am regularly in for it—thoroughly in love as a pastoral poet, just as you were.

JULES. Me! Oh, that's all over now.

ELEO. If you could only see my last conquest—such a duck; as innocent as—

JULES. Innocent! An innocent who wears the dresses and the diamonds with which you present her.

ELEO. But you don't understand. Now you shall judge of her extreme simplicity. She came to Paris to look for a place—she said—I told her that I wanted a confidential man—woman, I mean—I told her that I wanted a confidential woman, and that she could occupy that place in my house; she accepted it as the most natural thing in all the world; and what I give her, I tell her I shall stop out of her wages, ha! ha! Poor thing! she doesn't know the difference between the price of cashmere or mousseline-de-laine, and thinks that a casket of diamonds of the first water costs about three francs and a half.

JULES. And in return for all this you—

ELEO. I get nothing—nothing, I assure you. When ever I venture to say a word to her of the love that I feel simmering, I may say boiling in my heart—she flies into a passion and demands her wages.

JULES. What, and are you ruining yourself for a girl that doesn't care a straw for you?

ELEO. Alas, yes! Near her, my confidence deserts me, as you told me yours did: in fact, I'm just as you were—just like you. When she speaks to me, I stammer—just like you—I tremble, just like you. When she looks at me I feel—an ass, just like you.

JULES. Thank you; and your uncle—

ELEO. I shall give him my first envelope to-day, (that with the creditors in it); that will make him furious, and just as he is about to order the servant to show me to the door, I shall administer the second dose—'twill act on him like a composing draught; he will embrace me—pardon me—pay my debts, thanks to her for all.

JULES. To her! What do you mean? Explain?

ELEO. Impossible! It's a secret—a family secret; but you shall know some day. (*bell rings.*) That's my pretty little aunt. I shall be back directly. (*going.*)

JULES. Going?

ELEO. Yes. I don't want to see her.

JULES. Don't forget me in your list of creditors.

ELEO. Not I—don't be afraid. My uncle will be so grateful to me, that the more there is to pay, the better he will be able to express his gratitude.

[*Exit ELEONORE, C. and L.*]

Enter VALENTINE and MARGUERITE, L. D.

VALEN. I did not ring for you, Marguerite, but for—

MARG. Mademoiselle Anette. She is with the count.

VALEN. (*aside.*) Again. (*aloud.*) Do not call her; her presence is perhaps necessary to his lordship. I can wait. Ah, Jules, you here? I'm glad to see you. Monsieur d'Avrigny insists on my going out for amusement. Will you take me to the concert this morning?

JULES. With pleasure.

VALEN. You don't seem well. What is the matter?

JULES. Matter with me? Nothing.

VALEN. Marguerite, perepare my toilette—no, not you, but Mademoiselle Anette. She must be at liberty by this. (*she rings the bell violently.*) Go and tell her I am waiting.

[*Exit MARGUERITE, R. D.*]

Enter D'AVRIGNY, leaning on Noemie's arm, R. door; he walks with a stick, and is very lame.

COUNT. (R. C.) Gently, gently, my dear Valentine; we are coming as quickly as my leg will let me.

VALEN. I did not know that mademoiselle was still with you.

COUNT. Yes, she was with me, nursing and tending me as she has been constantly during this last two months. She was coming to you as quickly as she could. (*aside to VALENTINE.*) You seem angry, my dear?

VAL. Had I known you were in pain, I should have been with you; but you see I have a visitor.

COUNT. Ah, Jules!

NOEMIE. (*R. seeing him.*) Jules !

COUNT. Well, how goes the world—the race-course—the club—the opera—eh ?

JULES. (*L.*) Your nephew, monsieur, will be better able to inform you on these points.

COUNT. Ah, yes, I remember now, you are of a more serious turn. An unhappy attachment — a misplaced affection. I've heard something of all that.

NOEMIE. (*aside.*) Great heaven ! can he still love me ?

VALEN. You see my husband notices your constrained manner as well as me.

JULES. 'Tis true that I have loved—deeply—fervently ; but the feeling has now vanished for ever.

NOEMIE. (*aside.*) For ever !

JULES. But I forget, I am to attend you to the concert.

COUNT. Are you going out ?

VALEN. To the *matinée musicale* which you wished me to attend. Jules will accompany me.

JULES. I will return for you in a few minutes.

[*Exit JULES, C. and L.*]

NOEMIE. (*aside.*) Not one look ! He no longer loves me !

COUNT. (*sitting on the sofa, R. C.*) Anette, bring me a stool ; I feel fatigue and—and pain.

NOEMIE. Pain ! (*bringing stool.*)

VALEN. And you always hide your sufferings.

COUNT. Oh, a passing twinge. (*wincing.*) This stool is very hard.

(*VALENTINE and NOEMIE go to fetch a cushion ; NOEMIE places it on the stool first ; VALENTINE looks at her spitefully.*)

COUNT. (*to NOEMIE.*) Thank you, my child.

NOEMIE. (*aside.*) His child.

(*VALENTINE throws away her cushion.*)

COUNT. Has Baptiste brought up the letters and papers ?

VALEN. I'll ring for them.

NOEMIE. Pardon, madame, they are here.

(*takes them from her pocket.*)

VALEN. (*aside.*) Very well—very well.

COUNT. Valentine, will you read them to me ?

VALEN. (*seating herself near him.*) This is from the man who manages your property at Villeneuve.

(NOEMIE sits at opposite table at work.

COUNT. Ah, that's the steward's business.

VALEN. (*taking another letter.*) This is from François Robert, boatswain's mate of the Caroline.

COUNT. Give me that. Poor François! I received his letter on the evening of the day before my illness, and this infernal leg has prevented me answering him. He'll think that I've forgotten him. Forgotten him! no! I shall always remember that he threw himself before me, and received the blow from a boarding-axe intended for me. (*reading.*) "Captain, I write to inquire about your health, and to thank you for your kindness in complying with my request." (*astonished.*) What! (*he looks at VALENTINE and NOEMIE—NOEMIE lowers her eyes.*) "The three hundred francs you sent me, got me out of my difficulties,"—what, me! "and I can now re-embark without fear, as my poor old mother is out of the reach of want." I'm sure I never sent him a sou.

VALEN. But then the poor man has certainly received the money.

COUNT. My dear Valentine, you have done a good action.

VALEN. Me? I didn't send the money. I would most willingly have done so, but when you fell ill, I was in a state of such anxiety, that I forgot it as you did.

COUNT. You didn't send? Who then could have—oh, the steward, perhaps. Anette!

(NOEMIE pretends not to hear.

VALEN. Do you hear, Anette?

NOEMIE. (*rising and advancing R.*) Monsieur!

COUNT. Tell my steward to come here; I'll ask if it was he who—

NOEMIE. 'Tis useless asking him, sir—It was not he.

VALEN. How do you know?

NOEMIE. Because it—it was I.

VALEN. You!

COUNT. You, my child—you paid my debt—a debt of gratitude. How came the idea into your head?

NOEMIE. You read the letter in my presence, and as

you were in such pain, and madame in the midst of such anxiety that you forgot it, I took the liberty.

VALEN. But where did the money come from? When you entered this house you had none.

COUNT. True. How came you by so large a sum?

NOEMIE. You forget that on the occasion of your marriage you gave a year's wages to each of your—to each of your servants. Here everything is provided for me, and I want no money; so I took the liberty of sending it to this poor man who saved your life.

COUNT. Anette, you are—*(affected.)* you are a good girl, and I thank you—I thank you.

(about to take her hand.)

VALEN. *(stopping him.)* Monsieur! *(NOEMIE who has seen this is confused.)* My husband and I thank you, mademoiselle, for the service you have rendered us.

NOEMIE. Nay, madame, I do not desire—

VALEN. Go and prepare my toilette.

NOEMIE. Pardon me, madame, but if Monsieur the Count should require my services.

VALEN. *(sharply.)* Am I not with him?

COUNT. *(aside to her.)* Valentine!

VALEN. Go and do as I bid you.

(NOEMIE curtsies and goes out R. door.—A pause.)

COUNT. You are wrong, my dear.

VALEN. Wrong?

COUNT. I know that you don't like that poor girl, but you should not be harsh with her at the very moment when—

VALEN. Her presence irritates and wounds me.

COUNT. Eh?

VALEN. I know how attentive and careful she is of you; and perhaps because I cannot see another tending you with patience I—I am jealous.

COUNT. Jealous!

VALEN. Jealous of all that surround you—jealous lest you should be more grateful to another than to me.

COUNT. Dear Valentine! and this is your motive—

VALEN. Yes, and for this young girl—if I asked you to send her away—

COUNT. Send her away!

VALEN. We need not be ungrateful; give her money—a large sum of money, but let her go.

COUNT. Let her go!—

VALEN. You hesitate.

COUNT. You ask me to commit an injustice.

VALEN. Husband, I conjure—I implore you!

COUNT. You ask me to send her away—Anette, who has passed so many nights, sleepless and tearful, by my bedside! you ask me to send her away! and we can give her money! Send her away! the words seem to waken a fresh feeling in my heart; they seem as if they'd teach me how much gratitude and affection she inspires—how strong a hold she has upon me!

VALEN. Enough, sir, enough—I was wrong. We will speak no further on the subject.

COUNT. No, Valentine. You must leave her by my side. When you go to theatre, concert, or ball, leave me not surrounded entirely by lackeys.

VALEN. I go to concert or ball! Did you not yourself wish—

COUNT. I wish you to enjoy every pleasure—to do all that you wish. You wish to deprive me of the attention and devotion of this poor child who—who—no, no, I'll not consent! Never! never! [*Exit D'AVRIGNY, R. D.*]

VALEN. He has refused, and I had not the courage to tell him all I thought. I felt ashamed of avowing—oh, I am so unhappy! (*sinking on sofa.*)

Enter JULES, C. from L.

JULES. What's the matter, Valentine—in tears? I guess from what cause they flow—Noémie—

VALEN. Noémie!

JULES. Anette, I mean.

VALEN. You are right. A moment ago I asked my husband to send her away; he answered me, with tears in his eyes, that I learnt him how much he loved her.

JULES. Loved her! (*aside.*) Perfidious!

VALEN. But I will be revenged.

JULES. I am about to leave Paris.

VALEN. You! But what motive have you in—

JULES. Do not ask me. I have been offered the position of attaché to an embassy; to-day I will accept it.

VALEN. No, no, you will think better of it. But tell me, why just now, in speaking of Anette, did you call her Noémie?

JULES. 'Twas the name she bore in the village where I first knew her—a year ago.

VALEN. But her mother was Jeanne Perrot, my nurse?

JULES. No; her mother who died while I was in Marseilles, did not bear that name.

VALEN. Can it be?

JULES. Why this emotion?

VALEN. Tell me, Jules — (*seeing NOEMIE.*) No—silence!

Enter NOEMIE, R. door.

What do you want, mademoiselle? I did not ring for you.

NOEMIE. The count wished to know if you had gone to the concert.

VALEN. Tell him that I shall not go. (*aside to JULES.*) I shall remain and endeavour to find out—come, Jules.

JULES. Yes, I will leave Paris.

[*Exeunt VALENTINE and JULES, C. and L.*]

NOEMIE. He does not love me now! He would blush to love me—me, a servant! But I do not repent the sacrifice I have made for my father. I have found here the happiness I hoped from heaven. Sometimes when I am near him—near my father, how my heart beats—how I struggle to keep back the name that rises to my lips; and, when he treats me with kindness and affection, I feel ready to fall upon my knees and cry, father, I am the child that you repulsed; and since you can love a poor servant, do not refuse a little of your heart to your poor child.

SERVANT. (*without.*) Mademoiselle Anette is this way.

ANETTE *enters, richly dressed, C. from L.*

ANETTE. Thank you.

NOEMIE. Anette!

ANETTE. Noémie, I'm so glad to see you.

NOEMIE. And so am I—but how handsomely you are dressed!

ANETTE. Ain't I! But *you* ain't? I'm afraid your place isn't as good as mine.

NOEMIE. Your place?

ANETTE. Yes—at Monsieur Eleonore d'Avrigny's.

NOEMIE. Your place?

ANETTE. Yes. I thought at first I was going to be housemaid.

NOEMIE. But what are you then?

ANETTE. I'm lady companion to his wife, when he gets one.

NOEMIE. Companion! But who gave you this rich dress?

ANETTE. Monsieur Eleonore. He bought the things, and is going to stop it out of my wages.

NOEMIE. Wages?

ANETTE. I've three hundred francs a year.

NOEMIE. But this brocaded petticoat?

ANETTE. Got to be stopped out of my wages.

NOEMIE. That satin bonnet?

ANETTE. Got to be stopped out of my wages. The bonnet cost six francs, and the petticoat eight francs, ten sous.

NOEMIE. What, and your ear-rings—diamonds!

ANETTE. Fifty-five sous—two francs fifteen sous. Very pretty, ain't they? They've got to be stopped out of my wages, too.

NOEMIE. Anette, do you think you can—Oh, no; I see now, 'tis you who are deceived.

ANETTE. Am I? Don't you think they cost so much? Well, now I think of it, he never lets me buy things for myself.

NOEMIE. Anette, my friend, my sister, you are not yet lost, are you?

ANETTE. Lost!

NOEMIE. Listen. The dress now on you, the laces and diamonds are worth your wages for twenty years.

ANETTE. Eh? Then Monsieur Eleonore—

NOEMIE. Doubtless boasts to the world that he has made a new conquest.

ANETTE. Conquest!

NOEMIE. The woman to whom he gives dresses, diamonds—

ANETTE. Oh, I see. The little wretch! but make yourself easy, Noémie. They call me Noémie, now; and be assured, my sister, that I've never done anything to be ashamed of. You lent me your name pure and unsullied, and I'll return it to you, just as you gave it. (*they embrace.*)

NOEMIE. I believe you—I believe you.

ANETTE. You see I'm such a fool that it's easy to get over me. A brute! and I, too, thought him so good and so respectful for a master. He'd better look out—the next time I see him—

ELEONORE enters c. from L.

Oh, there you are!

ELEO. (c.) Noémie here!

ANETTE. I want to talk to you a bit.

ELEO. In one moment, my angel. (*to NOEMIE.*) Mademoiselle, will you ask my uncle if I can see him? Tell him that I have to speak to him on a subject of the gravest importance. [NOEMIE curtseys and exit, R. door.]

ANETTE. Now, sir!

ELEO. What's the matter, Noémie?

ANETTE. You—you've deceived me! This bonnet cost six francs, did it? And the ear-rings fifty-five sous, did they? And I'm to be lady companion to your wife, when you get one, am I?

ELEO. My dear Noémie, will you listen—

ANETTE. No, I won't! I give you notice! I discharge you! Pay me my wages and let me go!

ELEO. But what's the matter?

ANETTE. I know all—all—all—all—all!!! Pay me my wages and let me go!

ELEO. (*aside.*) The devil! And I who at this moment depended on her to calm my uncle's anger; besides, I really love her. (*to her.*) My love, I can justify myself; I will directly, but, just now, I expect my uncle, and—

ANETTE. I don't care who you expect. Justify yourself now—this instant!

ELEO. (*forcibly.*) So I will. Noémie, I've deceived you!

ANETTE. Oh, you confess it? pay me my wages!

ELEO. But it was for your happiness. I deceived you out of love.

ANETTE. Love!—pay me my—

ELEO. A pure, chaste, and tender love. I adore you; and, for your sake, I could commit any monstrosity; for your sake I'd do any d—d silly thing; for your sake I'd—I'd marry you!

ANETTE. Marry me! What, really—regularly?

ELEO. Extremely regularly. My name, my heart, my debts—I lay all at your feet.

ANETTE. At my feet! I shan't let 'em lay there long.

ELEO. You consent? Come to my arms.

ANETTE. Mind my bonnet! (*they embrace.*)

ELEO. My uncle's coming. Return to *our* house, Madame Elonore!

ANETTE. (*aside.*) His wife! A grand lady! Oh, my!

ELEO. Again. (*embrace.*)

ANETTE. Mind my collar. Good bye, duck.

ELEO. Adieu, darling. [*Exit ANETTE, c. and L.*]
Now all I want is my uncle's consent; but he must give it.

Enter D'AVRIGNY, R. door.

COUNT. Now, monsieur, you wished to speak with me?

ELEO. Yes, uncle. I have come to confess my faults, and to ask forgiveness.

COUNT. Forgiveness is not so easy, sir. This young woman for whom you have ruined yourself—this Made-moiselle Noémie—this—

ELEO. Hold, hold, uncle; say no word against her, or, sooner or later, your heart will reproach you.

COUNT. What?

ELEO. 'Tis she who will re-establish peace and harmony between us; 'tis she who will re-unite the hearts of two relatives who were created to esteem, to love, and to aid each other—in pecuniary transactions. (*aside.*)

COUNT. If this is all, sir—

ELEO. It is not all. (*giving a letter.*)

COUNT. What's this? (*reads.*) "List of my creditors."

ELEO. A numerous body, but select. I never owe

money but to persons of respectability, out of regard for you.

COUNT. For me?

ELEO. Yes; for as they will all have to receive their money in this house, I wouldn't expose you to the annoyance of having anything but persons of respectability to settle with.

COUNT. I will not again encourage your extravagance. Take it, sir. (*trying to return the paper.*)

ELEO. They will be here to-morrow at noon punctually.

COUNT. Then to-morrow at noon I shall send them away.

ELEO. You will, dear uncle, all paid and settled with.

COUNT. I will not pay them, I tell you.

ELEO. (*not taking back the letter.*) Well, I won't contradict you; but I give you my sacred word of honour that you will pay them. Adieu, dear uncle; receive my thanks for what you are *going* to do for me. (*aside.*) It's done. [*Exit ELEONORE, C. and L.*]

COUNT. Sad audacity! Pay all your creditors, will I? We shall see—we shall see. Your sang froid will fail you to-morrow, Monsieur Eleonore, when I send them back empty-handed as they came. (*opening envelope.*) Let's see who they are. "List of my creditors." (*finding letter enclosed.*) "Monsieur George d'Avrigny." For me! (*opening it, and reading signature.*) "Marie Lambert." Marie! a letter from her, after so many years. "George, death is stealing fast on me." Death! Poor Marie! "Have you ever thought of her who for eighteen years has prayed in secret for your happiness? who, for eighteen years has wept for you, but, to-day, finds life, with hope, exhausted. But that my conscience imposes on me a sacred duty, you never should have heard again of me; but I have not alone to suffer. I have—I have—a child—your daughter, George—a child, both young and beautiful. I do not ask you to give her your name or fortune, but I entreat you, on my knees, to guard and watch over her, that she may not, some day, die, despairing and abandoned, like her poor mother, Marie Lambert." (*with emotion.*) Oh, heaven! "Tis she—our child, Noémie—who is the bearer of this letter." Noémie! 'Tis the

name of her for whom my nephew has plunged into such ruinous extravagance. My child—lost! dishonoured! (*in tears.*) I see now the reason of his audacity—of his threat. My child! (*seeing VALENTINE.*) Valentine! Let me hide my tears; she must not suspect—

Enter VALENTINE, C. from L.

Ah, Valentine, you have not gone to the concert, then?

VALEN. No; I care neither for concerts nor pleasure. Discord and disorder reign in this house, but they shall reign no longer.

COUNT. What mean you?

VALEN. Just now you refused to send that girl away; now 'tis you yourself who shall order her to quit the house.

COUNT. For what reason?

VALEN. For having introduced herself, I know not for what guilty end, by deceit and falsehood.

COUNT. Valentine!

VALEN. I asked you to receive into your house my foster sister, but not her who has so audaciously assumed her name.

COUNT. What, Anette—

VALEN. Is, perhaps, now in her native village. The girl who is here is called Noémie Lambert.

COUNT. Noémie—Noémie Lambert! She, my ch— Who told you so? How know you this?

VALEN. From one who knew her a year ago; who loved, and was beloved by her—from my cousin.

COUNT. Jules de Mornas! He loved her and she—but why did he keep this matter secret?

VALEN. I know not. But now, George, will you accede to my wishes? Will you consent to send her hence?

COUNT. Send her to me. She shall not remain your servant—a servant in the house of—Send her to me—send her to me—now—directly!

VALEN. I will. (*going—returns.*) I thank you husband.

COUNT. No, let me thank you. Believe that I am grateful for the news that you have brought me. (*he kisses her hand. She exits R. door.*) My child! my daughter! She who has tended me with so much devotion was my

child—the child of poor Marie Lambert. Now I understand the pious subterfuge that brought her to my house; now I understand her indefatigable zeal, her anxious days, her sleepless nights. Poor Noémie, to be near me she consented to become a servant.

Enter NOEMIE, R. door.

She is here. Ah, she is lovely! Come here, Anette; what's the matter with you? You are pale and trembling.

NOEMIE. Madame told me that you wished to speak with me, and she said so in such a manner that—that frightened me.

COUNT. My poor child, they—they wish me to send you away.

NOEMIE. Away! Oh, for heaven's sake, I conjure you—I entreat you, monsieur, do not do so. Keep me near you. If I have offended madame, I will ask her to forgive me on my knees; if I have offended you—

COUNT. Me!

NOEMIE. For the future I will be so devoted—so humble—so submissive, that you will forget my fault, and restore me to your favour.

COUNT. Offended me! How is that possible? Think you I can forget your watchful days, your nights passed sleeplessly? When, overcome by pain I closed my eyes, others thought I slept, and left me; you—you alone remained by my bedside, and watched and wept over me.

NOEMIE. Me, monsieur? Oh, no!

COUNT. I have seen you, and heard your prayer to heaven; for you prayed for me as a good and filial daughter would pray for her father.

NOEMIE. (*starting.*) Her father! (*calming herself.*) I saw you were in pain.

COUNT. And, at that time, I thought I heard another well-loved voice—a voice that had not struck upon my ear for eighteen years.

NOEMIE. Eighteen years?

COUNT. I looked into your eyes, and through my pain it seemed to me that the angel of my first love came to claim my soul; and, that I might die in peace and holiness, heaven had sent Marie Lambert. (NOEMIE *sinks*

on her knees sobbing.) At my knees! To my heart! To my heart! In my arms! (*they embrace.*) My child!

NOEMIE. Father! Oh, my mother, if you could see us now!

VALENTINE and JULES enter C. from R.

COUNT. (R. C.) Valentine! (NOEMIE goes from him, R.)

VALEN. (L. C.) I fear that I disturb you; (*bitterly, in tears.*) 'tis my cousin who came to bid you his adieux. Jules, when you see my mother, you will tell her how happy you left the Countess d'Avrigny.

JULES. (L. *indignantly.*) Adieu, monsieur!

VALEN. Tell her that when I wished my foster sister to be near me, another was introduced into the house, who dared to outrage my feelings with impunity, since she could find a refuge and protection in the arms of my husband.

COUNT. What, madame, do you suppose—

VALEN. I suppose what all the world knows to be true, that you neither love nor respect me; that you despise the tenderness, and reject the love of a wife, and that this Noémie was brought into the house because she is your—

COUNT. Child!—yes, Valentine, because she is my child!

JULES. } Your child!

VALEN. }

NOEMIE. He has said it. He acknowledges me! Father, dear father! (*throwing herself in his arms.*)

COUNT. Yes, dear child, I acknowledge and am proud of thee! Read, read, (*to VALENTINE.*) You who know the history of my past life. The woman I first loved was Marie Lambert, and this—this is her daughter.

VALEN. (*reading.*) Her daughter!

NOEMIE. I deceived you, I confess, madame; but pray, pray do not send me from you.

VALEN. (*embracing her.*) Send you from me! Never! never!

COUNT. Ah, Valentine, you never looked so beautiful as now. (*embracing VALENTINE and NOEMIE.*)

Enter ELEONORE, C. from L.

ELEO. My dear uncle, you have got the list of—of my errors; now I come to show you my justification.

COUNT. I know that I have found my child.

ELEO. What, do you acknowledge it before my aunt?

COUNT. She has already pardoned me, as I, in my turn, pardon you.

ELEO. Oh, that's all right, then. (*going to c. d.*) Come in—come in, dear Noémie.

ALL. What says he?

ANETTE *enters c. from L.* ELEONORE *leads her down, L.*

ELEO. Throw yourself into your father's arms.

ALL. What?

ELEO. (*to NOEMIE.*) Just get out of the way, will you?

ANETTE. My father! That's not my father! That's Noémie's father!

ELEO. Eh? Noémie—

ANETTE. She's Noémie.

ELEO. She's Noémie! Then you—

ANETTE. I'm Anette Perrot.

VALEN. My foster sister.

ELEO. Anette Perrot—foster sister! But I thought I was going to marry my cousin?

ANETTE. Never mind—I'll marry you all the same.

ELEO. All the same!

COUNT. And I'll make her a wedding present of double the sum you owe.

ELEO. Double. (*calculating.*)

JULES. I congratulate you, count; but I hardly know whether to go or stay.

COUNT. Stay, by all means; for 'tis to you that I confide my daughter's happiness. (*joining their hands.*)

ELEO. You said double, I think. Just give me back that paper, uncle; there are two or three little debts that I forgot to put down.

ANETTE. Then you'll marry me?

ELEO. Of course. You said double, you know, uncle.

NOEMIE. Received unto a father's breast,
Sheltered by you, Noémie's blest.
For man below, and heav'n above,
Must smile on filial truth and love!

VALEN. COUNT. NOEMIE. JULES. ELEO. ANETTE.

R.

B.C.

C.

L.C.

L.



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Noemie.

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